

Adm. VERNON's Opinion
UPON THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
BRITISH NAVY.

[Price Six pence.]

Admiral V...-s Opinion

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Ad^m. V---N's Opinion

UPON THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
R
BRITISH NAVY:

IN A
LETTER to a Certain BOARD.

To which is Annex'd

By way of Illustration, his LETTER to the
Secretary of the same BOARD.



L O N D O N :

Printed for W. BICKERTON, in the *Temple*;
Exchange Coffee-House Passage, Fleet-street.

MDCCLIV.

Adm. V--n's Opinion

UPON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NAVY:

IN A

LETTER TO A CERTAIN BOARD.

To which is Annex'd

By way of Illustration, his Letter to the
Secretary of the same Board.



L O N D O N :

Printed for W. BICKERTON, in the Temple,
Exchange Coffee-House Passage, West Street.
MDCCLXIV.



Adm. V - N's Opinion

UPON THE

to a fifty Gun ship, be a proper

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

mentioned in your letter, of thirty-


BRITISH NAVY.

ty-four, and twenty-four, twelve

and six for the fifty Gun Ship; for

S I R,



 HAVE received your Letter of the sixteenth, in which you are pleased to signify that it is my Lords Commi-

fioners

ficers of the Admiralty's Desire I
 should let them know my Opinion,
 whether the present Compliment of
 Men allowed to a Ship of sixty-four
 Guns, being four hundred and
 eighty, and of three hundred Men
 to a fifty Gun Ship, be a proper
 Proportion of Men, agreeable to the
 Number and Weight of Guns, as
 mentioned in your Letter, of thirty-
 two, eighteen and nine for the six-
 ty-four, and twenty-four, twelve
 and six, for the fifty Gun Ship; or
 what Compliment of Men I think
 necessary for Ships of those Classes.

To which I must first observe,
 that I take this Case as Council
 would

would be apt to say to a young Attorney, not to be fully and clearly stated for giving an Opinion upon.

For we have many Ships, that are called sixty and fifty Gun Ships, that are built of very different Proportions and Strength; the one of which could support Batteries of large Cannon, which the others could not; and some have convenient Stowage for large Numbers of Men, and Quantities of Provisions for them, which the others are defective in. So that the primary Enquiry is to the Roomliness and Strength of the Ship, to know what Batteries she can support; and then

then the Numbers of Men requisite, are the secondary Consideration.

For in the eighty Gun Ship I was last in, the *Boyne*, her lower Battery was thirty-two Pounders, and the upper twelve and nine; and the apparent Reason those upper Batteries were not heavier, was, that the Beams were so light, that the Decks could not bear a heavier Battery; and therefore the Ships you mention, or any such Ships would soon be crippled, if the Strength of the Decks be not the first Consideration of what Battery of Guns it can support.

I re-

I remember the two finest Ships of their Rank, that ever I saw at Sea, were the old *Royal Sovereign*, and the old *Royal Oak*; I think, both said to have been built by Mr. *Fisher Harding*: They had fine Batteries of Guns; they were Stiff Ships that could use them, when any Ship could carry out a lower Battery, good Sailors, and good Roadsters: And, I think, I have heard the Builder told his Majesty King *Charles II.* of the *Royal Oak*, that he built a Ship at once, meaning, I presume, of sufficient Strength and proper Proportions, that did not want Cob-

ling afterwards. It is certain those compleat Ships, were Ships of great Strength and long Duration, and that our modern Ones are famous for neither; but to the great Cost of the Crown, have been found eminently defective in both.

If what we meet in the Publick Papers be true of the *French* Ships, Captain *Watson* was detached out singly to chase, and by whom he was taken after a gallant Defence, against so superior Power: One of them is called sixty-eight Guns, and said to have had seven hundred Men, the other sixty-four Guns and six hundred and fifty

fifty-Men. But if we had the Opportunity of knowing the Dimensions of their sixty-four Gun Ships, I doubt not they would be found of greater Dimensions than those we call such with us, and at least as big as our seventy Gun Ships; for they don't generally crowd their Ships with Guns, as we do; in which, I think them much in the right, and that we cripple our Ships by it, without any real Conveniency arising from it. I have given it as my Opinion in Private, as well as in Publick, that the arbitrary Power with which a half-experienced

enced, and half-judicious Sir ~~_____~~
of the Navy hath been entrusted,
had in my Opinion half ruined
the Navy: and I am sure I am
far from being Singular in that
Opinion; for I have been asked
whether I thought the Navy
would have suffered most by the
Loss of their Battles against the
French, or from his Measures,
which I made a moot Case of;
but others have frankly said, they
should have declared their Opi-
nion against Sir ~~_____~~, to whom
I have no personal Enmity, nor
any personal Reasons for having
it. ~~Publick that the arbitrary Powe~~
~~er with which a half-expert-~~
enced

But as I think the Basis and Foundation of securing to this Nation the Blessings of the Protestant Succession, and Continuance of this Royal Family upon the Throne, principally consist in the Support and maintenance of our Naval Power; so I think the Duty of an Officer and a faithful and dutiful Subject of my Royal Master, calls upon me to avow my Sentiments in this Particular.

And I appeal to my Lord *W—*, whether I did not mention to him my Thoughts of

of what might be a proper Method for his serving his Majesty effectually in that Particular, which to the best of my Memory was this, *viz.* That the Builders of the King's Yards, and the most eminent of the Builders of the Merchants Yards, should respectively draw a Plan of Proportions for a Ship of each Rank, and draw up his Reasons in Writing for the Support of his own Plan; and then to be summon'd together before their Lordships, that every one might be admitted to support his own Plan, and to give Answers to the Objections each might have to make to what was

pro-

proposed by the other : By which I thought a perfect Plan might be formed, which then should be given in Orders to the S^{er} to see duly executed, which I take to be the proper Business of a S^{er}.

And I fear his usurping the whole Direction, or having been permitted to do it, with his too much Pride and Self-sufficiency to be capable of being better informed, and too little good Sense or solid Judgment for being capable of directing all himself, has made ours a declining Navy in the Art of Ship-Building, at a Time when
both

both *France* and *Spain* have been greatly improving in it. I think these are Matters that require a timely and serious Consideration; and in that View I joined with those, who were for having such an Enquiry entered upon by a select Committee of the House of Commons; where it might have been carefully enquired into by the Time, Care and Application that such a Thing would require, if it had not been jockey'd off by those who dislike all Inquiries; though they may be necessary when those, whose proper Province it is, seem to think it to be too much Trouble for them.

I am

Answer
 I am sure I think it very highly
 ly for his Majesty's Service, some
 Body should enquire into it be-
 fore it be too late ; as I apprehend
 our Royal Master's true Interest
 is most likely to be the fatal Sacri-
 fice of not making some such timely
 Enquiry. I thank God, I have
 always served the Crown faith-
 fully and diligently, in every Post
 that has fallen to my Lot to be
 called upon for the Crown's Ser-
 vice ; as I hope I shall ever do
 with a steady Fidelity, becom-
 ing the Duty of a faithful and
 loyal Subject ; in which View I
 C have

(18)

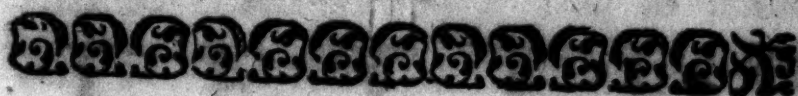
have given this as my Answer
to their Lordships Enquiry, and
am,

S I R,

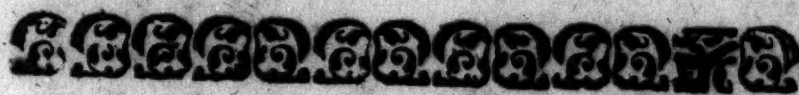
Your most humble Servant.

June 18,

1744.



A
LETTER
TO THE
SECRETARY
OF A
Certain BOARD, &c.



PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD.

A

LETTER

TO THE

SECRETARY

OF A

Certain Board, &c.

THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF TRADE



A
LETTER
TO THE
SECRETARY
OF A
Certain Board, &c.

Nation, June 30, 1744.

SIR,

AS we that live retired in the
Country, often content our-
selves with the Information
we derive from News-Papers on a
Market.

Market-day, I did not so early observe the Advertisement from your Office of the Twenty-third of this Month ; That in Pursuance of His Majesty's Pleasure, the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty had made the following Promotions therein mentioned : In which I could not but observe, there was no Mention of my Name amongst the Flag-Officers ; though by your Letter of the sixteenth Instant, you directed to me as Vice-Admiral of the Red, and (by their Lordships Orders) desired my Opinion on an Affair for his Majesty's Service, which I very honestly gave them, as I judged

judged most conducive to His Honour : So that their Lordships could not be uninformed that I was in the Land of the Living.

Tho' the Promotions are said to be made by their Lordships Orders, yet we all know the Communication of His Majesty's Pleasure must come from the First Lord in the Commission ; from whom principally His Majesty is supposed to receive His Informations, on which His Royal Orders are founded. And as it is a known Maxim of our Law, *That the King can do no wrong*, founded, as I apprehend, on the Persuasion, that the

Crown

Crown never does so but from the Misinformation of those whose respective Provinces are to inform His Majesty of the particular Affairs under their Care; the first Suggestion that naturally occurs to an Officer, who has the fullest Testimonies in his Custody, of having happily served His Majesty in the Command he was intrusted with, to His Royal Approbation, is, that your first Commissioner must either have informed His Majesty that I was dead, or laid something to my Charge, rendering me unfit to rise in my Rank in the Royal Navy; of which being insensible myself, I desire their

Lord-

Lordships would be pleased to in-
 form me in what it consists, hav-
 ing both in Action and Advice
 always, to the best of my Judg-
 ment, endeavoured to serve our
 Royal Master with a Zeal and
 Activity becoming a faithful and
 loyal Subject, and having hitherto
 received the public Approbation of
 your Board. I confess, at my
 Time of Life, a Retirement from
 the Hurry of Business to prepare
 for the general Audit, which every
 Christian ought to have perpetually
 in his Mind, is what can't but be
 desiræable, and might rather give
 me Occasion to rejoice, than any
 Concern, which (I thank God) it
 does

does very little. Yet, that I might not by any be thought to be one that would decline the public Service, I have thought proper to remind their Lordships I am living, and have (I thank God) the same honest Zeal reigning in my Breast, that has animated me on all Occasions to approve myself a faithful and zealous Subject and Servant to my Royal Master. And if the First Lord Commissioner has represented me in any other Light to our Royal Master, he has acted with a Degeneracy unbecoming the Descendant from a noble Father, whose Memory I reverence and esteem tho' I have no Compliments

(279)

ments to make to the Judgment
or Conduct of the Son.

June 30 1744

To Thomas Corbett, Esq;
Secretary of the Ad-
miralty.

To this no Answer was returned



(28)

AMONG the Private Testimonies in the Custody of this Gentleman, it may not be improper to add the following Public One.

Mercurii, 9 Die Decem. 1741.

MR. S-----r acquainted the House, that in Obedience to the Commands of the House of Commons in the last Session of Parliament, he had transmitted to Vice-Admiral N----- their Thanks for the Services he had done to his King and Country in the *West-Indies*. That some time the last Summer, after the Dissolution of the Parliament, a Letter was brought
to

((29))

to him by J---s V---n, Esq; Brother of the said Admiral, which Mr. K--- said, he had received from the said Admiral, and which Mr. S--- said, being directed to him in his private Capacity, he opened; and that it contained an Answer from Vice Admiral V---n to the said Thanks of the House of Commons, as followeth,

viz. I am very sensible of the great Honour done me by the House, in their Approbation of my Services to his Majesty and my Country, and thinking them deserving of this Publick Notice,

As the Publick Approbation of so great an Assembly, is the highest Honour

SIR,

SIR, *THE singular Honour done me in being thought deserving of the unanimous Thanks of the House of Commons, for my Endeavours to discharge my Duty to his Majesty in these Seas, is what I can't find Words sufficient to express my grateful Sense of; but I shall ever retain a just Acknowledgment of the great Honour done me by the House, in their Approbation of my Services to his Majesty and my Country, and thinking them deserving of their Notice in this Publick Manner.*

As the Publick Approbation of so august an Assembly, is the highest Honour

Honour a Subject can receive, I must beg the Favour of You, Sir, to assure the House, that a grateful Sense of it will never be effaced out of my Memory ; and that I shall endeavour, in all my future Conduct, by a continued Diligence and faithful Discharge of my Duty to his Majesty in the Execution of his Orders for the Honour of the Crown, and Service of my Country, to study to preserve the Continuance of their Esteem——

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient,
and most humble Servant,

E. V——N.

F I N I S.

Honour a Subject can receive, I
must beg the Favour of You, Sir,
to assure the House, that a grate-
ful Sense of it will never be effa-
ced out of my Memory; and that
I shall with all my In-
dustrie continue Dilig-
ence and Vigilance of my
Duty to his Majesty in the Exe-
cution of his Orders for the Honour
of the Crown, and Service of my
Country, to study to preserve the
Continuance of their Esteem —

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient,
and most humble Servant,

E. V. —

F I N I S